



# Department of Justice

Acting United States Attorney James R. Klindt  
Middle District of Florida

Tampa

Orlando

Jacksonville

Fort Myers

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Monday - May 7, 2007

<http://www.usdoj.gov/usao/flm/pr>

CONTACT: STEVE COLE

PHONE: (813) 274-6136

FAX: (813) 274-6300

## **23 ARRESTED ON DRUG CHARGES IN FT. MYERS DURING OPERATION " PALM BEACH BOULEVARD"**

\_\_\_\_\_ Ft. Myers, FL - Acting United States Attorney James R. Klindt, Mark Trouville, Special Agent in Charge Drug Enforcement Agency, Chief Hilton Daniels, Ft. Myers Police Department, and Stephen B. Russell, State Attorney, 20th Judicial Circuit, announced today the arrest of 23 individuals on drug charges during "Operation Palm Beach Blvd." Eight defendants have been federally indicted while the others face state charges. (see chart for names and charges)

"Operation Palm Beach Blvd." began in September 2006 when DEA teamed up with the Ft. Myers Police Department and began identifying individuals and organizations who were responsible for drug trafficking in the Palm Beach Blvd. area of Ft. Myers. Investigators determined that some of the drug dealers also owned and operated businesses within this area which they used to conduct their criminal activities.

On Friday night, May 4, 2007 search warrants were served at four locations locations: Las Duenas Bar (3819 Palm Beach Blvd), Club 809 (3238 Palm Beach Blvd.), and the Tropical Nightclub Restaurant(3639 Palm Beach Blvd.), and a residence located at 706 Karlov Street.

Seventeen of the individuals identified and charged were already in jail. On Friday evening another five defendants were arrested on drug charges and last evening another defendant was located and arrested. In addition to the 23 individuals arrested another

three defendants were arrested Friday night on immigration charges.

The Palm Beach Blvd. area is also a "Weed & Seed" area which is a Department of Justice sponsored project. The comprehensive strategy is designed to combat drug activity and violent crime within specific neighborhoods. Along with enforcement of these crimes the "Weed & Seed" strategy simultaneously works with social services, prevention, and economic development entities to seed the areas with new opportunities for its residents. The purpose is to "weed out" criminal and negative activity while "seeding" the community with opportunity.

The agencies that investigated "Operation Palm Beach Blvd." include: the Drug Enforcement Administration (DEA), Ft. Myers Police Department, and the State Attorney's Office (20th Judicial Circuit). U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) also assisted with the arrests on Friday evening. This case is being prosecuted by Assistant United States Attorney Jesus Casas.

An indictment is merely a formal charge that a defendant has committed a violation of the federal criminal laws, and every defendant is presumed innocent, unless or until proven guilty.